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ABSTRACT

This document, fourth in a series, describes trends in statewide assessment programs. It is based on surveys conducted in the past for the Association of State Assessment Programs. States were asked to describe the assessment programs they operated during the 1995-96 school year. Part One of the survey asks each state to describe its existing program, its collaborative partners, and what it is developing. Part Two of the survey asks each state to describe its efforts in nontraditional assessment. Part Three of the survey asks each state to describe each assessment program, component, or groups of assessments that are used to gather a set of data used for the same assessment purposes. For each component, states explain who is tested, what subjects are tested, and what types of assessments are used. In addition, states describe accommodations provided to English language learners and students with disabilities. States have designed very different assessment systems, from use of a norm-referenced test alone to use of performance assessments. Most states, however, use a combination of multiple choice, short-answer, extended-response questions, performance tasks, or portfolios. This is the last year the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory will participate in the collection of survey information on assessments; the program will continue under the direction of the Council of Chief State School Officers. (Contains 2 figures, 24 charts, and 8 references.) (SLD)

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ED 412 278

TRENDS

in

State Student Assessment Programs

FALL 1996

Data on Statewide Student Assessment Programs

Linda Bond, CTB/McGraw-Hill
Edward Roeber, CCSSO
David Braskamp, NCREL

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The Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide, nonprofit organization composed of the public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO seeks its members' consensus on major educational issues and expresses their view to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. Through its structure of standing and special committees, the Council responds to a broad range of concerns about education and provides leadership on major education issues.

Because the Council represents the chief education administrators, it has access to the educational and governmental establishment in each state and to the national influence that accompanies this unique position. CCSSO forms coalitions with many other education organizations and is able to provide leadership for a variety of policy concerns that affect elementary and secondary education. Thus, CCSSO members are able to act cooperatively on matters vital to the education of America's young people.

The State Education Assessment Center provides a central clearinghouse to improve data acquisition, monitoring, and the assessment of education. More recently, the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) was formed to network states and other groups to develop assessment designs, as well as prototype and complete assessment components for a variety of content areas. Projects are taking place in arts education, comprehensive assessment design for Goals 2000/ESEA Title I, health education, interdisciplinary standards and assessment, limited-English proficient assessment, literacy performance assessment, primary-level assessment, reading/writing performance assessment, science education, social studies, assessing special education students, technical guidelines for performance assessment, and workplace readiness. The goal in all of these projects is to encourage the development of higher quality student assessments at lower cost to the states.

The Council also supports the Association of State Assessment Programs (ASAP), an informal network of state assessment staff, in order to provide direct assistance to the states.

COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS
Gordon Ambach, Executive Director

STATE EDUCATION ASSESSMENT CENTER
Wayne Martin, Director

STUDENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS
Edward Roeber, Director

One Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20001 - 1431
(202) 408-5505

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State Student Assessment Programs

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Data on Statewide Student Assessment Programs

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Council Of Chief State School Officers
One Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001-1431

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PREFACE

This is the fourth edition of the *Trends in State Student Assessment Programs Fall 1996*, a product of the collaboration between the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL). This is the final year that NCREL will participate in the collection and dissemination of the results from the annual survey, since Linda Bond (formerly with NCREL) has taken a position with CTB/McGraw-Hill. The survey will continue in the future under the direction of CCSSO, with new partners, since the annual survey remains the single best source for information about statewide student assessment programs, and its contents are comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date.

This document describes the trends in statewide assessment programs. It is based on surveys conducted in the past for the Association of State Assessment Programs (ASAP) by its chair, Edward Roeber. This year's survey was extensively revised by an advisory committee put together by CCSSO and NCREL, and the surveys were mailed to states in September 1996. States were asked to describe their assessment program(s) they operated during the 1995-96 school year. Surveys were received from October 1996 through January 1997 they were processed first by CCSSO and then were sent to NCREL for data entry, survey completion, and editing. Between December 1996 and February 1997, each assessment director received a copy of his or her state's information for editorial review and updates. These changes were made by NCREL. NCREL produced the final tables, tabulations of results, and all charts and graphs used to display the results.

The data from 1995-96, plus the prior four years, provide a rich lode of information on the status of and trends in state assessment practice. This report provides the reader with information on the current status of programs, as well as descriptions of how the programs have changed over the years. A companion document, *Status of Statewide Student Assessment Programs Fall 1996*, is also available from CCSSO. The data are also available in electronic form (as Acrobat files suitable for Macintosh and Windows). An order form is attached to this document. Selected and updated information from the database and these documents are available at CCSSO's and NCREL's World Wide Web sites (http://www.ccsso.org or http://www.ncrel.org).

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about this document, the assessment programs in states, or other questions.

David Braskamp
Linda Bond
NCREL

Ed Roeber
CCSSO

Chapter One
Introduction to the State Student Assessment Programs Database

The topic of student assessment generates considerable controversy among educators and members of the public. Some view large-scale assessment programs as critical elements of the reform and change needed in American schools. Two primary reasons for this are: (1) assessment can provide direction and motivation to students, parents, teachers and others to help students learn the skills needed to succeed both in school and in life after school; and (2) assessment programs can help gauge the success of our schools. An indication of the strength of their appeal is the number of states that currently have assessment programs: 46. Of the remaining four states, Colorado and Minnesota are at work developing assessment programs. Iowa and Nebraska are the only two states that are not presently administering or developing a statewide assessment program.

However, there are educators and members of the public who view many large-scale assessments with reservations. Critics feel such programs can exert negative pressure on teachers and students. Much of the debate surrounds such issues as the content covered by the assessments, the type of assessment used, how the assessments are scored and the uses made of the assessment results. However viewed, large-scale statewide assessment programs are a fact of life in the United States.

While state assessment programs share some common purposes and methods, they can also be quite different. Differences exist for various reasons – for example, the educational policy climate in the state, the technical quality issues surrounding the use of assessment to make high-stakes decisions, or the status of curricular reform in the state. We need to recognize these differences in order to understand the assessment programs that exist and the options that are available to change these programs.

In addition, we need to recognize the movement in Washington, DC to limit the federal role in education by shifting more responsibility for education to the states. A result of this shift has been that states have been given more control over the educational resources provided to their schools. Similarly, states have shifted more responsibility and control from the state to the district and school levels. The price for increased flexibility and control has traditionally been increased accountability and, therefore, increased assessment. Historically, much assessment activity and experimentation in new forms of assessment have occurred in states. We will be keeping an eye on how these shifts in responsibility will affect state assessment and whether state assessment will continue to play a major role in educational reform.

The Association of State Assessment Programs (ASAP), an informal organization of state assessment directors, began collecting information about large-scale assessment programs at the state level in 1977. The results of the annual ASAP surveys were provided to states in the form of a written summary of each state's assessment program. In 1991, Ed Roeber, ASAP's chair, became director of student assessment programs for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). A partnership with the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) led to the current form of the State Student Assessment Program (SSAP) database. This report is a result of the fifth year of that partnership. However, this is the final year for this partnership, as Linda Bond has left NCREL. CCSSO will be continuing the survey in the future with new partners.

As the amount of information increases over time, we are able to provide more meaningful information to states because we are able to monitor patterns of change in state assessment programs. As data collection continues in the future, we hope to sharpen the analysis of change in statewide assessment practices.

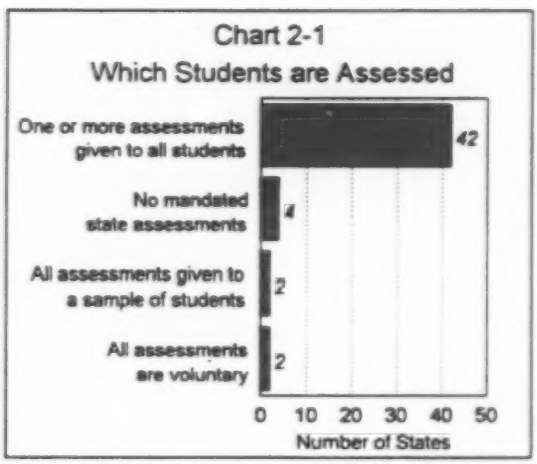
The survey annually collects three kinds of information. Part One of the survey asks each state to describe its existing program, its collaborative partners and what it is developing. Part Two of the survey asks each state to describe its efforts in nontraditional assessment. Part Three of the survey asks each state to describe each assessment program, component, or groups of assessments that are used to gather a set of data used for the same assessment purposes. For each component, states explain who is tested, what subjects are tested and what types of assessments are used. In addition, states describe accommodations provided to students with disabilities and English language learners. From this detail, we can build a more detailed picture of what statewide assessment programs look like and how they are attempting to accomplish their state assessment goals. This report is a summary to provide an understanding of what the 50 states are doing and how they are doing it.

Chapter Two
Overview of State Student Assessment Programs

This chapter provides an overview of the assessments that states conduct. A tabular overview appears in the Summary Table in the Appendix. The detailed responses for each state to the survey are available in a companion publication, *Annual Survey of State Student Assessment Programs, Fall 1996.*

Pervasiveness of Statewide Assessment

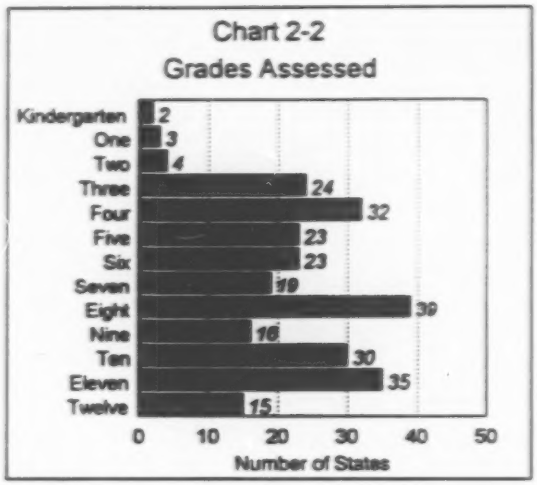
States have the option of administering their assessments in different ways: to all eligible students, to a sample of students, or to students on a voluntary basis. As indicated in Chart 2-1, most states choose to include all possible students on at least one set of assessments.



Given that 46 states have administered statewide student assessments in the 1995-96 school year, statewide student assessment is an important factor in making educational decisions in states nationwide.

Which Grades are Assessed

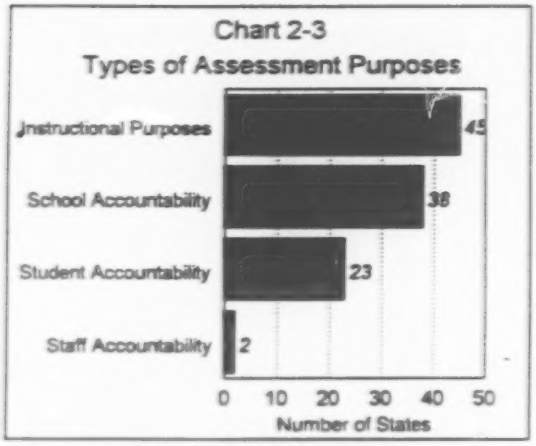
States assess students in kindergarten through grade 12, but, as in indicated in Chart 2-2, some grades are assessed more than others.

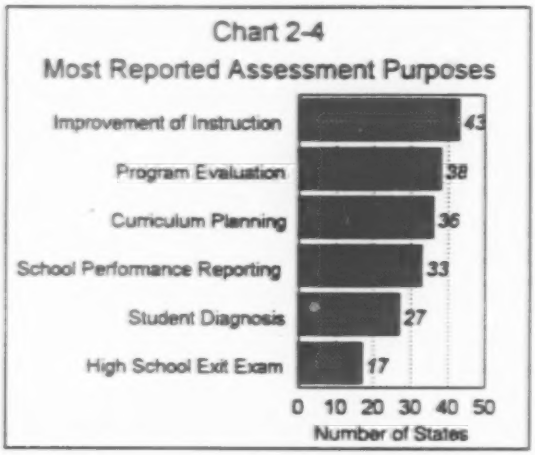


Elementary school grades are assessed more consistently than high school grades. In addition, few states do not assess early childhood grades (kindergarten through second grade). The three grades that are assessed the most often are grades 4, 8 and 11. These assessments occur at the end of elementary, middle and high school and commonly serve as summative assessments of elementary or high school performance.

Why States Assess with Statewide Assessments

There are two basic reasons why states conduct assessments: to improve instruction and to hold schools and students accountable. Charts 2-3 and 2-4 (next page) summarize the basic purposes and highlight the main purposes.

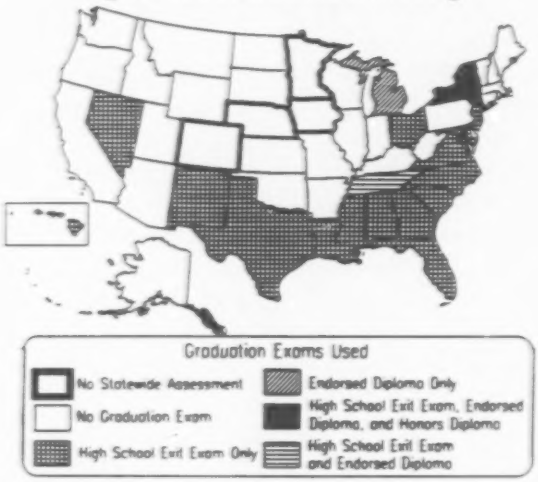




As Chart 2-3 indicates, virtually all states with assessment programs report using them for improving instruction. Purposes designed to impact classroom or building-level practice (e.g., curriculum planning) are more likely to be reported than those affecting individual students (e.g., student placement). In a similar way, school-level accountability purposes (e.g., school performance reporting) are more reported than purposes that impact students directly (e.g., high school graduation testing). Statewide student assessment programs are basically not used for staff accountability purposes.

High school graduation tests are the most popular type of individual student accountability purpose reported. States may use these tests as an high school exit requirement, to grant an endorsement on a diploma, or to receive an honors diploma. Figure 2-1 shows the distribution of high school graduation tests of all types nationwide.

Figure 2-1
High School Graduation Testing


Graduation Exams Used
No Statewide Assessment
No Graduation Exam
High School Exit Exam Only
Endorsed Diploma Only
High School Exit Exam, Endorsed Diploma, and Honors Diploma
High School Exit Exam and Endorsed Diploma

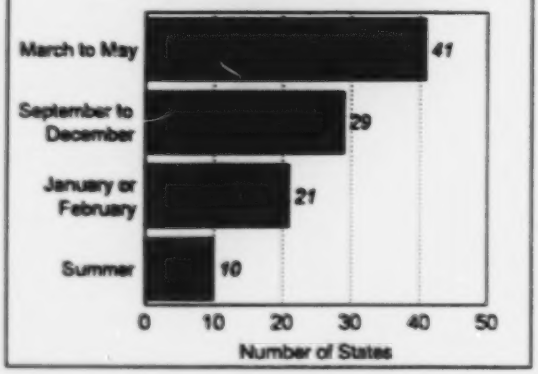
The use of these tests is concentrated in two areas: almost all of the states on the southern United States border and most of the eastern seaboard. The midwest and far west United States generally do not use high school graduation tests.

When Assessments are Administered

Assessments meant to serve the purposes of improvement of instruction and educational accountability would ideally be administered at different times of the school year. Assessments used to improve instruction would be given in the early part of the school year in order to provide timely feedback for school administrators and teachers. Assessments used for educational accountability would be given at the end of the school year to measure student knowledge at the latest possible time. As chart 2-5 indicates, almost all states assess some or all students near the end of the

school year (March, April, or May), and many states also administer some assessments during the fall semester (September to December).

Chart 2-5
When Students are Assessed



The many assessments administered in the late spring may be ideal for accountability purposes, but they are almost always reportedly used in some way to improve instruction. When assessments are administered at the end of the school year there is virtually no good way for states to help improve the instruction or curriculum for students who took those tests.

Issues around designing assessments that can meet the purposes of instructional improvement and accountability simultaneously are also important to consider. For example, two thirds of states with assessment programs report using the same assessment for instructional improvement and school performance reporting. Combining the purposes of instructructional improvement and school accountability in one program may require conflicting differences in test design and availability of the results.

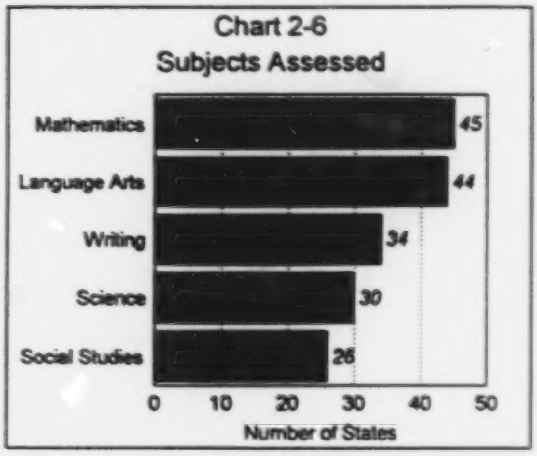
Designing an assessment program to meet high-stakes accountability purposes typically requires standardization of test content, administration and scoring. Accuracy of scoring and standardization of test administration procedures are paramount. Test security is high, with results determined at a centralized scoring center and returned weeks, sometimes months, after the assessment is administered.

The very safeguards that ensure comparability and fairness limit the utility of the results for instructional decision making. For an assessment to be effective as an instructional improvement tool, the results need to be made available almost immediately so that teachers can adjust their instruction. Reviewing assessments over the summer may be helpful for curriculum planning, but teachers need access to ongoing assessment information to modify instructional strategies within the classroom. A classroom-based assessment system, albeit somewhat standardized by virtue of the learning goals being assessed, requires continuous, unobtrusive collection of assessment data, flexible administration and immediate feedback. Unfortunately, this flexibility is typically seen to violate the standardization necessary for accountability purposes.

The state assessment directors acknowledge the difficulty inherent in using the same assessment for both instructional improvement and accountability purposes. However, state law and regulation often require them to do so. States, therefore, are designing assessment systems that try to capture both sets of purposes in ways to minimize the conflict between them.

What Subjects are Assessed

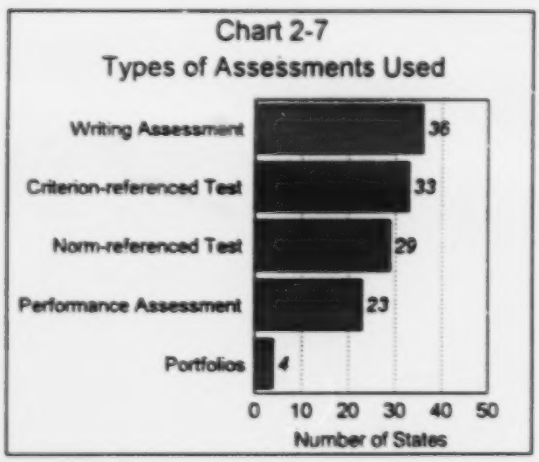
As Chart 2-6 indicates, traditional subjects are the ones most assessed in statewide assessments.

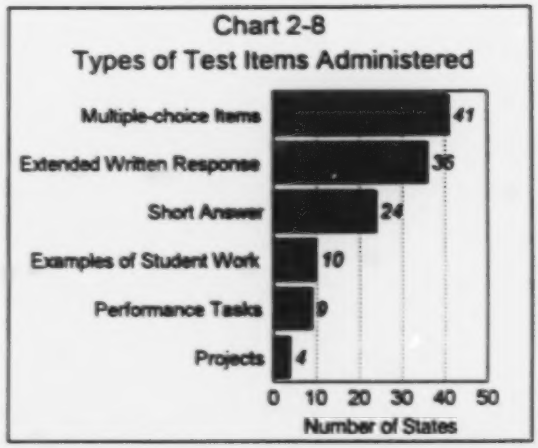


Mathematics and language arts are assessed by almost all states. Writing, science and social studies are assessed by most states. As it has been for many years, the three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic) remain the most commonly assessed subjects.

How States Assess Students

As indicated in Chart 2-7 and Chart 2-8, states use a variety of tests and item types to assess student knowledge.

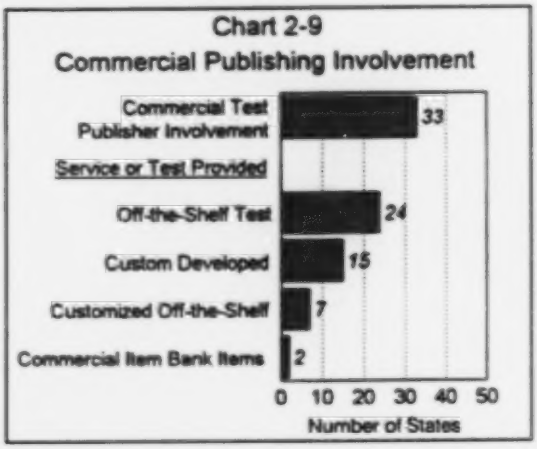




Writing assessment and criterion- and norm-referenced tests are the most common types of assessments reported by states. Performance assessment by states continues to rise (up from 17 last year), while portfolio assessment is still used by only a few states.

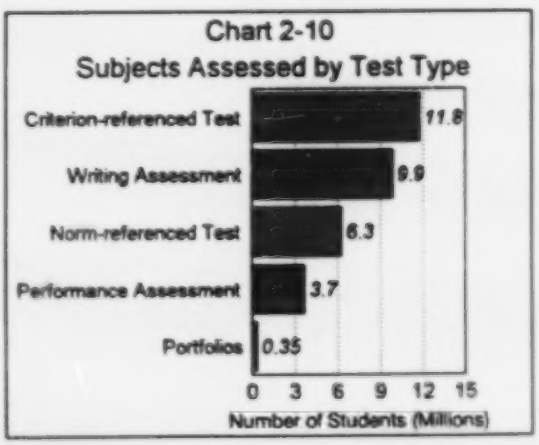
For the first time, we asked states to report specifically what types of items are used on the assessments they administer statewide. Almost all states use multiple-choice items, traditionally found on criterion- and norm-referenced tests, because of the psychometric advantages, ease of administration and low cost associated with them. Extended written response, commonly found on writing assessments, requires students to write in response to writing prompts. Surprisingly, examples of student work from the classroom are used by more states than just those using portfolios. The number of states using performance tasks and projects is less than the number of states using performance assessment. This indicates that the term "performance assessment" still can indicate a variety of assessment types, including extended written response, performance tasks, and/or projects. In many cases, states reporting the use of performance assessment probably were pointing to their use of extended written response items.

In designing, administering and scoring statewide assessments, states often depend on commercial publishing companies to help with some or all of the work. As indicated in Chart 2-9, commercial test publishers have worked with most states on at least one statewide assessment.



Off-the-shelf tests (e.g., TerraNova) are used by half of the states with programs interested in comparing groups of students to norm groups, generally national or state. The custom-developed tests are a joint venture between the states and commercial testing publishers to design a test that matches the state curriculum more closely than off-the-shelf tests.

Chart 2-10 displays the minimum number of students assessed by each type of assessment.



States have a range of the number of students, may use a sample of students or make certain assessments voluntary, giving us a view of how students are assessed nationwide. The multiple-choice test is the most dominant assessment type used statewide. States appear to be almost as comfortable with administering and scoring writing assessments with extended responses as they are with administering multiple-choice tests. Performance assessments, with relatively fewer students for the number of states reporting them, are often voluntary or used in states with smaller student populations. They are more difficult to use on a large-scale level than multiple-choice or writing assessments.

Summary

Statewide assessment is an important factor in making instructional improvement and accountability decisions nationwide. In response to these potentially conflicting needs, states have designed very different programs from only using a norm-referenced test, to using only performance assessments. Most states, however, use a combination of multiple-choice, short answer, extended response, performance tasks, or portfolios. As states continue to increase the number of different combinations, it will be interesting to watch how they grapple with the pressure to use tests to improve instruction and hold schools, students and staff accountable within the same or different assessment programs.

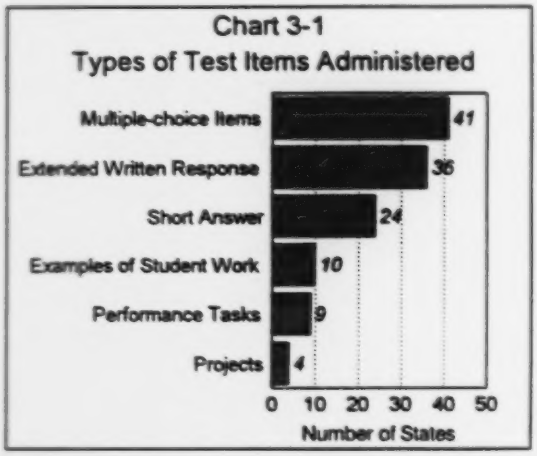
Chapter Three
New Forms of Statewide Assessment

Conventional multiple-choice assessments continue to be the most popular form of assessment in state assessment programs, but the number of states that rely exclusively on multiple-choice assessment is small. This number has changed slightly from a low of 5 states in 1993-94 to a high of 9 states in 1994-95. 7 states reported using only multiple choice items in their state assessment programs during the 1995-96 school year, the most current year for which data is available. Although exclusive reliance on multiple-choice is uncommon, forty-one states report using multiple-choice items as part of their state assessment program, and twenty-nine of these have at least one assessment component within their system that relies exclusively on norm-referenced and/or criterion-referenced multiple-choice items. Clearly, multiple-choice remains a favorite assessment choice for states, but it is not the only choice.

Prompted by a growing concern that the kinds of skills needed for success in the 21st century go beyond those that are typically taught and assessed in traditional educational settings, states have been revising their student learning goals, their curricula and the forms of assessment they use to measure mastery of those student goals. As a major part of this educational reform effort, states have explored alternative[1] forms of assessment, which require students to produce answers rather than simply select correct answers.

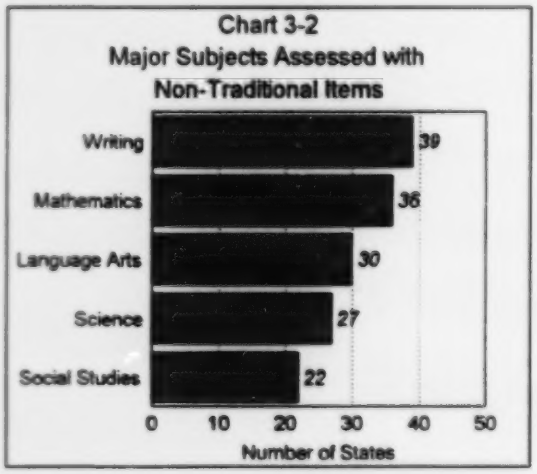
An Overview of Non-Traditional Assessment in the United States

This year, we tried to get a better idea of what types of assessment items are considered "alternative" or "performance" assessment by states. Chart 3-1 displays the types of test items administered.



The most common forms of "alternative" assessment are assessments typically in writing, but also in mathematics, language arts, science and social studies. The more "hands-on" forms of alternative assessment – performance tasks, portfolios and student projects – simply are not that common.

As Chart 3-2 indicates, subjects assessed with non-traditional items are the same as those assessed with traditional items.

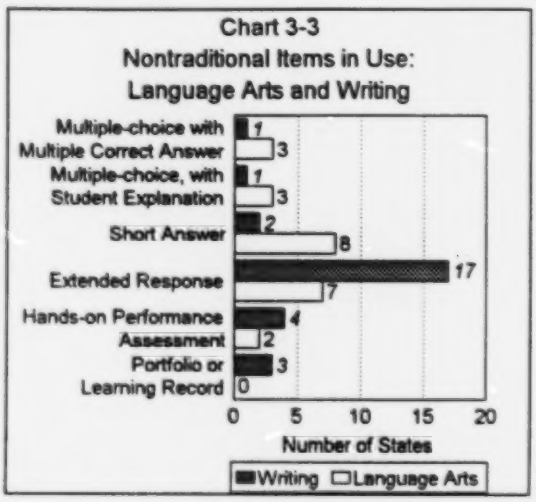


[1]Throughout this chapter, alternative assessment and non-traditional assessment refer to non-multiple-choice assessment. The two terms are used interchangeably.

Writing continues to be the subject most commonly assessed with alternative assessment.

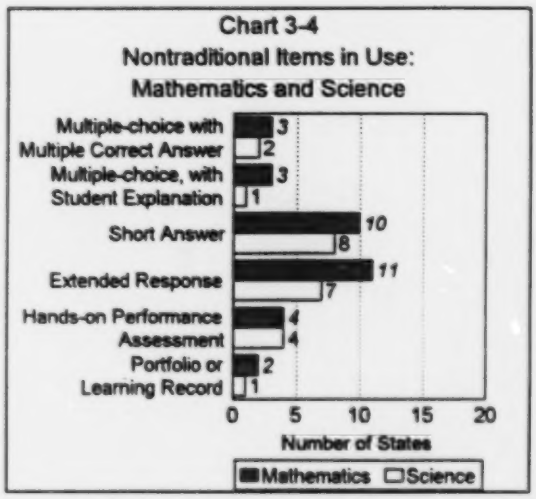
This is not surprising, considering that writing is one skill that most agree cannot be assessed except by having the student write.

The types of non-traditional items in use in the subjects of language arts and writing are detailed in Chart 3-3. Extended response is clearly the favorite choice for assessing writing, while short answer and extended response items are used most often for language arts.



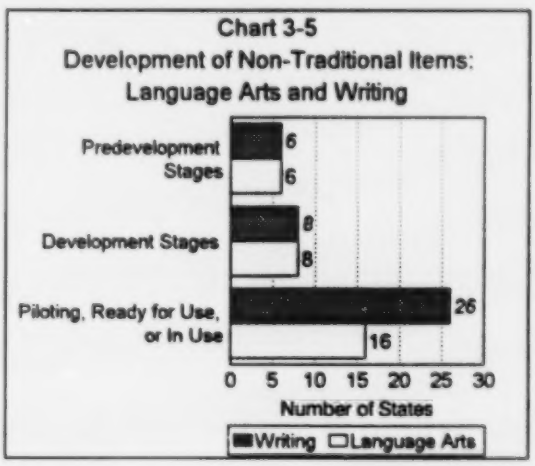
With mathematics and science, short answer and extended response are again the most popular forms of non-traditional items states use within their assessment programs.

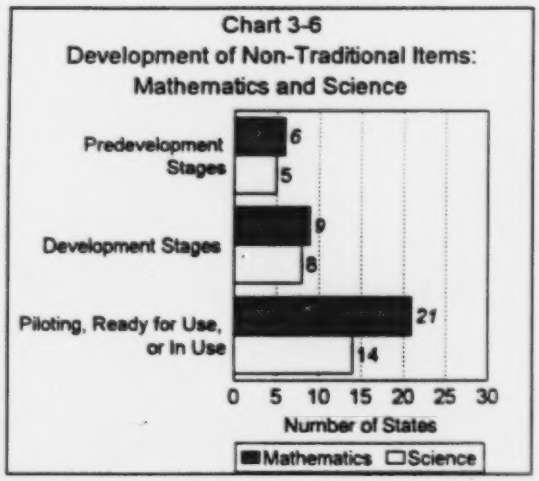
Considering the need to ensure standardization of format, presentation, administration and scoring of state assessments, especially where student or school scores will be compared to a uniform standard, using these fairly traditional approaches to non-traditional assessment makes sense. Standardizing more "hands-on" assessments, such as laboratory experiments or student projects, is more difficult. It is possible to score short answer items as right or wrong, and states have had a long history of using extended response items with the assessment of writing since the 1970s.



Non-Traditional Exercise Development in the 1995-1996 School Year

There is considerable development of non-traditional test items taking place within states, with the vast majority of the test items being piloted, ready for use or in use. (See Chart 3-5 for language arts and writing; Chart 3-6 for mathematics and science.)





This pattern may indicate that most of the states are very close to implementing or have already implemented the alternative assessment items they plan to develop. These items tend to be short answer or essay (extended response) items and in the traditional subject areas of writing, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Wyoming is a notable exception; it assesses only vocational education students with a wide variety of alternative assessment approaches.

A Blend of Assessment Approaches is Most Common

Most states have added these alternative items to their existing forms of assessment, but some have created separate non-traditional assessments as part or their entire state assessment program. In fact, twenty-three states report having at least one assessment component that includes no multiple-choice items.

In looking at Figure 3-1, we see that most states have some combination of assessment types as part of their state assessment programs. Of the forty-six states with state assessment programs, 7 states use just multiple-choice items, ten use some form of extended written response in addition to multiple-choice, 9 rely upon multiple-choice, short-answer and extended written responses, fifteen rely upon multiple-choice, extended response and other forms of alternative assessment, and 5 rely upon alternative forms of assessment only. These 5 are Delaware, Kentucky, Maine, Vermont and Wyoming. Delaware administers a writing assessment, Kentucky uses extended response plus examples of students' work, Maine employs extended response items, Vermont uses short answer and extended response items, and Wyoming[2] relies upon observation, examples of students' work, and projects.

Figure 3-1
Test Type Combinations

Combinations of Item Types
No Statewide Assessment
Alternative Items, Extended Response, and Multiple-Choice
Extended Response and Multiple-Choice
Extended Response, Short Answer, and Multiple-Choice
Multiple-Choice Only
Alternative Items Only

The Jury is Still Out

While states have been moving toward the inclusion of alternative forms of assessment at a steady pace, few have made broad-sweeping changes to their programs, and those that have made changes found out too late that their publics were not as enthusiastic about the changes as were the originators of the programs. Three of the states that were farthest along in their use of alternative assessments as a primary assessment strategy (California, Kentucky and Arizona) have hit major detours

[2] Wyoming assesses students in vocational education only.

due to technical problems, cost and public criticism of content. In California, the state's major assessment program, the California Learning and Assessment System (CLAS), which relied heavily upon performance assessments and constructed-response items, has been discontinued. In its place will be a statewide basic and applied academic skills assessment at key grade levels and a voluntary Pupil Incentive Testing Program. The highlights of the Pupil Incentive Testing Program include:

1.) Districts will receive $5.00 per student to select a published achievement test.
2.) Districts must assess students in reading, spelling, written expression and mathematics by a standardized test from a state-approved test list.
3.) Districts must administer the tests to all eligible students from grades 2 through 10.
4.) Districts must report the results annually to their students, teachers, parents and governing board.

California continues, however, to use alternative forms of assessment in its Career-Technical Assessment Program and its Golden State Exams (end-of-course exams), a fact that is not well known.

Arizona is another state that had a major non-traditional assessment program suspended in school year 1994-1995 and for now only administers a norm-referenced, multiple-choice test.

Another state that moved away from multiple-choice items toward the exclusive use of performance assessments and portfolios has faced similar problems. In Kentucky, multiple-choice items have been returned to the assessment program with the addition of a traditional, standardized test as well. In relying on performance assessments and portfolios exclusively, Kentucky found it needed more information per student, and it needed to be collected in a cost-effective and technically sound manner.

Two other states that were moving toward a heavier reliance on performance assessment have had the funding for their programs withdrawn, but one of them has moved forward despite controversy.

In Wisconsin, the funding for a performance-assessment component of the Wisconsin assessment system was dropped after a three-year developmental period was near completion. Full implementation in language arts and mathematics had been planned for next year.

Indiana similarly lost some of its funding after developing and piloting a new assessment program, which included a move away from norm-referenced testing to criterion-referenced testing, and the inclusion of a substantial number of open-ended items and performance tasks. The new legislation called for the continuation of the norm-referenced test with its criterion-referenced supplement, one open-ended mathematics task and one writing sample at benchmark grade levels. Even this minimal inclusion of alternative assessment was challenged in a lawsuit claiming the test invaded the privacy of children. Indiana won the suit.

Indiana was able to expand its use of open-ended tasks last year, at least in part because new legislation built into the system extensive public review of all rubrics and open-ended items by a citizen's review panel. In addition, rubrics for the writing tasks are released to the public before the administration of the assessment, and all open-ended tasks are released after administration of the assessment. In this way, Indiana has been able to maintain writing assessment tasks, integrated reading/writing tasks, and mathematics open-ended tasks in addition to a norm-referenced test and a criterion-referenced supplement. The state was also willing to pay for the increased

costs incurred due to the release of the assessment materials, thus allowing the program to continue and to grow.

The first three states discussed (California, Kentucky, and Arizona) were among the leaders in the alternative assessment movement. Kentucky is the only one of the three that remains in the forefront; California's program is defunct, and Arizona's is on hold. The other two states discussed, Wisconsin and Indiana, may have been caught in the flak that resulted from the very public attacks against the first three states' programs. Political battles, concern over so-called "non-objective" and "intrusive" forms of assessment, high costs and technical difficulties seem to be at the heart of many of the concerns expressed about alternative assessment activity. Some of these concerns will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Despite these roadblocks, the amount of state activity in the development and use of alternative assessment items is considerable. The chart having to do with state development of non-multiple-choice items within the printed version of this year's database covers 21 pages! While the majority of these projects are extended response and short-answer, there are quite a number of states that are developing or have developed hands-on performance tasks including: Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, New York, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming. Projects, exhibitions and demonstrations are also being developed in Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, New York, Ohio and Wyoming. Clearly the benefits of this form of assessment are great enough for states to work toward overcoming the barriers. More discussion on these barriers and ways to overcome the barriers follow later in this chapter.

Why a Blended Assessment Approach?

The fact that states are moving toward the use of multiple types of assessment makes sense. After all, no single form of assessment is appropriate for all purposes. There are trade-offs involved in the use of any assessment strategy.

Alternative forms of assessment are being explored for many reasons. First, there is a national movement to clearly define student standards; that is, what students should know and be able to do. Along with the standards movement comes a desire to accurately describe what students now know and can do vis a vis the standards. Alternative forms of assessment are being designed to make these determinations, particularly with standards that cannot be assessed with a paper and pencil test. In addition, many of the standards are different from what has traditionally been taught in schools. Changes in the workplace and in the skills needed for life in an information age suggest that students need knowledge and skills that will enable them to solve increasingly complex problems. Some of these skills cannot be assessed using traditional, multiple-choice assessment, and this is causing many states to explore alternatives.

Multiple-choice assessments require students to select a "right" answer from among several "wrong" answers. These assessments are useful for assessing knowledge and the straightforward application of that knowledge. On the other hand, open-ended assessments that require students to generate their own solutions to assessment problems or tasks are becoming increasingly necessary to assess new learner outcomes that call for more complex applications of knowledge and skill. Many states are concerned that relying exclusively on traditional multiple-choice, basic skills assessments results in a narrowed curriculum that produces students who memorize a lot of facts and skills, but have little ability to apply them to real-life situations. However, these

assessments are easy to administer, fairly inexpensive and yield a broad sample of student performance in a relatively short period of time. They simply cannot be used to assess more complex applications of student knowledge, and they offer few clues to the teacher about why the student gave a correct or incorrect answer.

This is why states are adding alternative forms of assessment. One of the major benefits of non-traditional assessment is that, in addition to judging the correctness of the student's answer, the appropriateness of the procedure that the student employed is also considered. This gives teachers more information for diagnostic purposes because the teacher can determine where the student is having difficulty. But non-traditional assessments also have their trade-offs – most notably, the increased cost and time associated with their development, administration and scoring. Ensuring the reliability of these assessment results has also proven costly and difficult, although the benefits in improved assessment of complex skills and the modeling of good instruction is worthwhile to many states. Another difficulty of non-traditional assessments is generalizability. Different performance tasks evoke different levels of skill from the same students. This limits the likelihood that a given performance on a small sample of tasks will be strongly indicative of the student's overall ability.

For these reasons, most states are combining traditional assessment programs with non-traditional assessments. They are also examining their traditional programs, which are getting a face-lift with new content and standards.

Constraints on Developing Non-Traditional Assessments

States continue to struggle with a number of constraints concerning the implementation of alternative assessments. These include: time and cost constraints, technical quality issues, and resistance to change.

Time. There are two time constraints. The first is the time to develop a test. This is compounded by a sense of urgency: several states reported legislative mandates to put their programs into place before the tests were ready. The second constraint is the time to administer an alternative assessment in the classroom. In the time it would take a student to complete one or two performance tasks, that same student could have completed 200 items on a multiple-choice test.

Cost. Again, there are several issues. Since the technologies are new, the procedures to develop items or tasks are not nearly as well established as in the development of multiple-choice assessments. It takes people more time to develop and test such items. The time that testing requires in the classroom also adds to the cost of alternative assessment. Alternative assessment items are more expensive to score than multiple-choice tests. Alternative assessments require teachers or other professionals to record observational data or make judgments about extended artifacts of student performance. This requires the skill and time of individuals if the work of many students is to be assessed.

Professional development expense. There is also a considerable expense for the professional development of alternative assessment. Staff need to understand the changes, need training in the consistent conduct and use of alternative assessment items, and need support in using and reporting the results of alternative assessment. However, the professional development benefits derived from teachers who

design, implement and/or score the non-traditional assessments is a benefit many states cite as a major reason to continue this work.

Technical Quality. Because non-traditional items are a new technology, it is far from easy to obtain uniform results. While some technical concerns are not unique to non-traditional items and may in fact pose less of a threat, i.e., the issue of validity (are we assessing important learning?), they remain real, and others, such as reliability (student results are an accurate reflection of the student's performance rather than a result of extraneous influences such as who does the scoring) or generalizability (scores on this assessment would be similar to scores on similar assessments), continue to be daunting. There is so much more flexibility with non-traditional assessment that maintaining uniformity of administration, scoring and interpretation is more difficult.

Public Engagement. Resistance to new forms of assessment comes mostly from students, teachers and parents. All three are more familiar with standardized tests where minimal preparation and administration time are required, and reports are familiar and support a norm-referenced, grading system (A,B,C,D,F). Organized parents' groups have fought the new assessments in a number of states due to concerns that the open-ended nature of performance assessments will allow students to be judged by the personal values they include in their responses rather than by their academic performance.

Summary

In reviewing the data on non-traditional assessment activity this year, it would appear that where states have implemented performance assessment as a slow and deliberate process without much fanfare, their programs have been spared. Connecticut was one of the first states to proceed with performance assessment, but it did so through a series of research grants and only implemented the assessments once they had been thoroughly researched. What the results are used for also seems to make a difference. Most of the states that report a lack of major difficulties in implementing non-traditional assessments tend to use their assessments as end-of-course exams (for example, Alabama's Math End-of-Course Test and California's Golden State Exams), for early-childhood screening (for example, Georgia's Kindergarten Assessment Program), for career/employability skills assessment (for example, California's Career-Technical Assessment Program), as instructional planning tools (for example, Connecticut's Academic Performance Test), or when the alternative assessment is a writing sample (for example, Idaho's Writing Assessment, Rhode Island's Writing Assessment, and Vermont's Uniform Test in Writing). All of these are fairly low-stakes purposes, meaning that consequences of poor performance are not severe for students, schools and/or teachers. State assessments seem to come under attack most often when the use of the test results is high-stakes – student graduation, school accreditation, school takeover, etc. Of course, these assessments receive the most press attention and public appraisal. Most programs have flaws, but when severe consequences are dependent upon the results, any flaw becomes more pronounced.

However, it is clear that strictly traditional programs are becoming increasingly uncommon. States are embracing new forms of assessment and looking for ways to make them work. It's an exciting time in large-scale assessment, and as long as the public is brought along, the technical quality issues continue to be resolved, and the cost and time management issues are addressed, a blended assessment program will continue to be the preferred model of state assessment. Going back to the days of "one type fits all" assessment is highly unlikely.

Chapter Four
Special Topics: Assessment of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners and Title I Assessment and Evaluation Plans

Part I: Assessment of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners

When the 103rd Congress overhauled the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the new Title I legislation (the Improving America's Schools Act) called upon states to hold all students to the same high expectations and to ensure they have equal educational opportunities (Phillips, 1995). The definition of those high expectations and the design of the assessment system used to determine whether or not students have achieved those high expectations are left to individual states and local school districts. This has spurred a growing debate over which students should be tested and how that testing should be conducted. A major concern surrounds the inclusion of students with disabilities and Limited English Proficient students in statewide assessment programs.

Three questions are of paramount importance in understanding the current practice of assessing students. How many students with disabilities and English language learners currently participate in statewide assessment programs, what kinds of special testing conditions or accommodations are allowed to enable these students to participate, and are their scores included in public reports? These questions were included in the Fall 1995 edition of the Association of State Assessment Programs (ASAP) survey. Additional information about the assessment of students with disabilities is provided by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), a group committed to assisting states in implementing activities to improve outcomes for these students, and to documenting states' efforts in doing so (Ysseldyke, 1996). The author also relied heavily upon an article written for NCREL by Susan Phillips, an attorney and measurement professor at Michigan State University, entitled *All Students, Same Test, Same Standards: What the New Title I Legislation Will Mean for the Educational Assessment of Special Education Students.*

Overall Policy for Ensuring the Participation of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners in the State Assessment Program

States were asked to describe their inclusion policy for students with disabilities, and most reported that the decision was left to the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) committee as to "whether or not the student could meaningfully participate." Some states provide guidelines specifying that if the student is in the regular education program for at least half of his or her instruction in that subject, then the student should be tested. Still, the IEP committee makes the final determination. The IEP committee also determines whether or not the student requires testing accommodations in order to participate, with an increasing number of states stipulating that the testing accommodations must be consistent with those modifications which are already used in the student's instructional program. The decision to include or exclude a student, and the testing accommodations to be allowed, must be documented in the student's IEP.

Some states have interesting twists on this general policy. For example, until this year, Kansas allowed students with disabilities to be tested at either chronological grade level or instructional grade level. This year, the instructional grade level will no longer be an option. North Carolina is also interesting because it attempts to encourage schools to include as many students as possible in their state assessment program by allowing only those schools without excessive exemptions to

be eligible to receive bonus funding for demonstrating exemplary growth. One concern with which most states have struggled is what to do about testing accommodations that affect what is assessed. In Virginia, results of testing with accommodations that result in changes in the construct being assessed (e.g., listening, in place of reading) are flagged. Vermont allows students with disabilities to be excluded from norm-referenced assessment, but not from their portfolio program.

Decisions to include or exclude English language learners from a state assessment also tend to be made at the local level, although state guidelines tend to be fairly specific. In most states, the decision to include an English language learner is based upon the student's English language proficiency as determined by the amount of time in an English as Second Language (ESL) program and/or their score on a test of English proficiency. North Dakota's policy states emphatically that these students are not to be excluded. The state divides its assessment results into subgroups to foster accountability for "all" students' learning. Tennessee has a very interesting policy for English language learners; first-year English language learners must take, at a minimum, the math computation sections of the state assessment. Second-year English language learners must take the reading and language sections in addition to math computation. Third-year English language learners must complete the full battery. In Maryland, English language learners may be exempted from state assessment only once. In Vermont, English language learners can be exempted from standardized, norm-referenced testing but not from the state portfolio.

For all states with a high school graduation test, the inclusion or exclusion of students with disabilities or English language learners in assessment presents two added concerns, which are fairness to students and accuracy of certification. In other words, do students who are excluded from the graduation test receive a diploma, and do students who take the high school graduation test under non-standardized conditions receive a special designation on their diploma that documents this? The first issue is obvious – should a student's disability impact the student's ability to demonstrate competence? Most would answer a resounding "no." However, the second question is harder to deal with. If the accommodation that is provided to a student affects that student's score in a way that does not give the student an advantage when compared to other students, the accuracy of the certification of competence comes into question. Although we didn't address these issues specifically in the survey, a number of states addressed these concerns in their response to the general questions about inclusion and accommodation policies. For example, in Florida, only students who take the graduation test may receive a regular diploma, and other students who do not take the state test are encouraged to pursue special high school diploma requirements.

Until Title I legislation called for the assessment of all students, most states chose to leave the decision about inclusion and accommodation to the local district. The increased attention being paid to the topic is evident in the increased number of sessions on the subject at educational conferences such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference in Chicago in March, and the Council of Chief State School Officers annual assessment conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado in June. There is also a new Special Interest Group on the Assessment of Special Populations through AERA.

Participation of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners in Statewide Assessment

Forty-one states have written guidelines about the participation of students with disabilities in their statewide assessment programs, but of the 133 different assessments employed by states, state special education directors participation can estimate participation rates for only 49 assessments (Ysseldyke, 1996). When

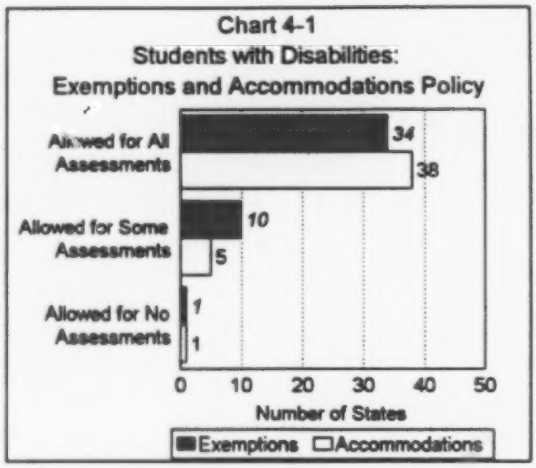
participation rates for students with disabilities are offered (by only 18 states), they range from 3.5 to 15 percent of the total tested elementary population and 0.4 to 12 percent of the total tested high school population. The accuracy of these participation rates is questioned by both state testing directors and special education directors because the data is not collected systematically in many places. Even with our improved questions, the decision about whether or not to include a student with disabilities in the state assessment program tends to be a local IEP committee decision. The state may not even know how many students with disabilities are exempted from testing.

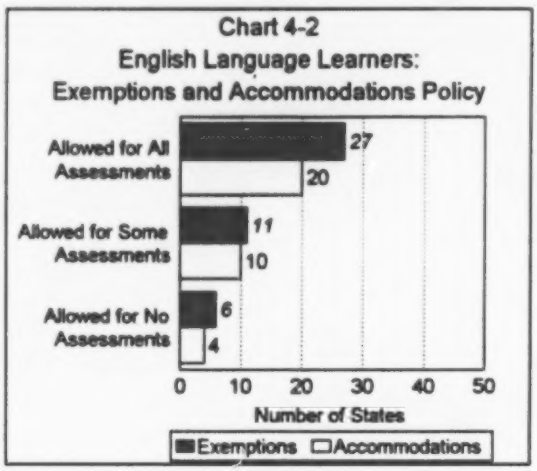
This data is even less well understood for English language learners where states estimate that from 0.2 to 6 percent of the elementary students and from 0.2 to 5 percent of the high school students who are assessed are English language learners.

Better and more precise information about the assessment of students with disabilities and English language learners will need to be collected at the state level in order to have an accurate estimate of the participation rates of these students.

Survey Results Concerning the Inclusion and Exclusion of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners

Chart 4-1 shows that 34 states allow some students with disabilities to be excluded from all state assessments, 10 states allow for their exclusion for some assessments, and only one state disallows exclusions (Kentucky). With English language learners, 27 states allow exemptions from all state assessments, 11 states allow it for some assessments and six states do not allow exemptions. See Chart 4-2.





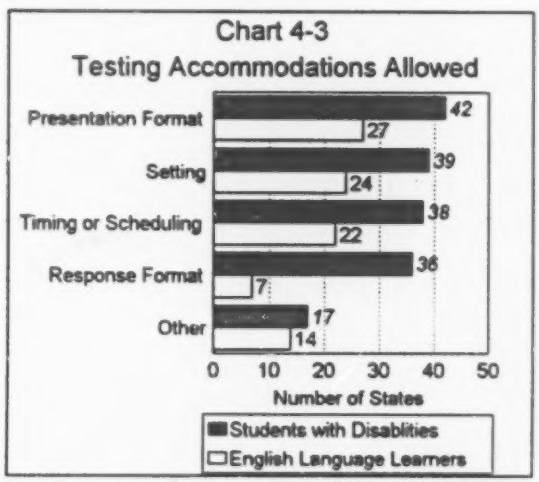
Testing Accommodations Allowed

When students with disabilities or English language learners are included in statewide assessment, the extent to which testing accommodations are allowed also varies. From Charts 4-1 and 4-2 we see that only one state includes students with disabilities in state assessment programs without accommodations, and 38 include them but allow accommodations. Five more states allow accommodations for some assessments. Six states include English language learners without accommodations, 11 states allow accommodations with some assessments and 20 include them in all assessments with accommodations. For most of these decisions, if the assessment is deemed inappropriate, that is, if the student is not expected to master the

content of the assessment as part of the student's instructional plan, a decision may be made to exclude him or her from the assessment. If the assessment is deemed appropriate as is, the student is included without accommodation. If the assessment is deemed appropriate but only with special accommodations, the student is allowed those accommodations. The decision is never as clear-cut as this sounds. A great deal of local flexibility is allowed in most states, and local districts interpret the broad state policies in varied ways.

Types of Testing Accommodations Allowed

This year, we divided allowable testing accommodations into five categories for students with disabilities and English language learners: presentation format, setting, timing or scheduling, response format and other. Chart 4-3 shows the kinds of accommodations allowed for students with disabilities and for English language learners.



Forty-two states allow students with disabilities to have accommodations in the way the test is presented to them. Typical accommodations include those offered to blind students or students with low vision such as large print or Braille editions of the test, and the reading, interpretation or repetition of test directions. For Limited English Proficient students, common accommodations also include the reading, interpretation and repetition of directions but in addition include the translation of the directions and/or the test items into the student's native language.

The setting in which students with disabilities are assessed can be modified in 39 states. As might be expected, the kinds of accommodations that are allowed include quiet settings that are free from distractions, small group settings, and/or administration by someone with whom the student is familiar. English language learners are allowed the same kinds of accommodations.

Changes in the timing or scheduling of assessments is allowed for special education students in 38 states. Extended testing time, more frequent breaks, and the spreading out of testing sessions across several days are typical modifications in timing and scheduling. Similar accommodations are allowed for English language learners, although not as often.

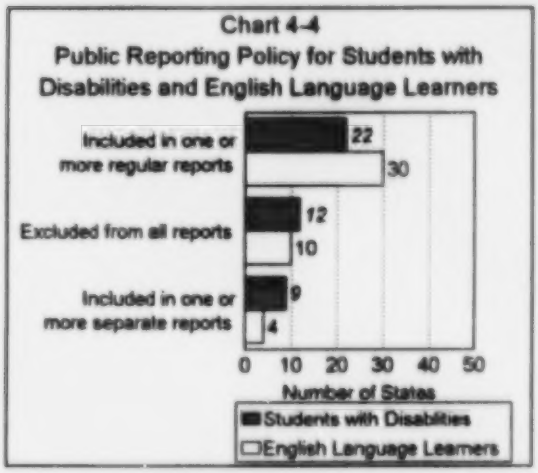
Students with disabilities are allowed to change the way in which they respond to the assessments in 36 states. Students can use a computer or word processor or have a scribe record the students' responses. With English language learners, students may also be allowed to respond in their native language.

In the other accommodations categories, some states allow students with disabilities and English language learners to use word lists or dictionaries, and/or allow out-of-level testing for students with disabilities.

Public Reporting of Assessment Results

Even when special education students participate in the statewide assessment program, their scores may not be included in the state, district and school averages. Many states offer schools this option, partly because they are interested in having as many special education students tested as possible, and partly because the special circumstances under which some special education students take the

test make the results less comparable to those of other students.



More states include the scores of English language learners in their regular public reports than those of students with disabilities (See Chart 4-4). A similar number of states (12 for students with disabilities and 10 for English language learners) exclude the scores of students with disabilities and English language learners from all public reports. Less than half as many states (four) provide separate reports for English language learners than do states for students with disabilities (nine states).

What Next?

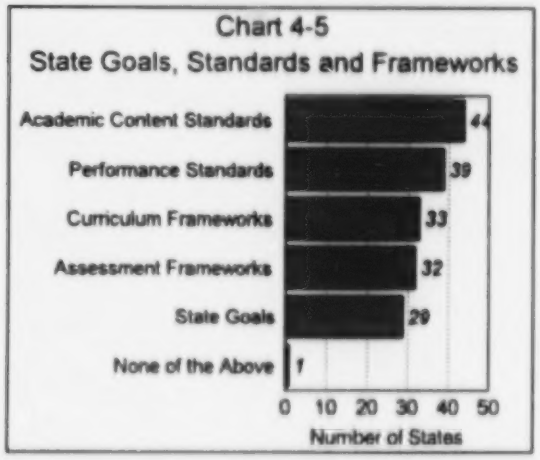
While the field of measurement has contributed a set of rules concerning reliability and validity of results that help govern the inclusion and/or accommodation of students with disabilities and English language learners, little actual research exists that demonstrates the impact of accommodations on test validity. Several studies are underway, a number of them sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics (Phillips, January 19, 1996), to address this question empirically. In addition, special education and assessment representatives from thirty states met in January 1996 at a CCSSO Special Education State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) to discuss these and other related questions concerning the assessment of special education students. Other studies are needed to assess the impact of inclusion or exclusion of special education and English language learners on the educational opportunities these students receive as a result of that decision. The studies now underway should provide additional guidance to those who are concerned for the right of these students to be assessed and to be provided the opportunity to reach the same high standards as their non-disabled or English language peers.

Part II: State Title I Assessment and Evaluation Plans

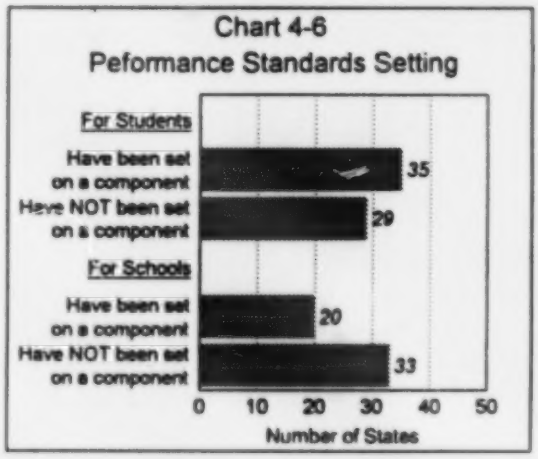
A separate section of the Fall 1996 Association of State Assessment Programs survey was dedicated to states' assessment and evaluation plans for Title I. The major issues states are dealing with are the revision of their academic content standards, the setting of performance standards to reflect "rigorous standards for all students," and the definition of adequate yearly progress for program evaluation purposes. They are also struggling with how best to include all students in the assessment program, an issue addressed in the previous section of this chapter.

Content and Performance Standards

Chart 4-5 clearly indicates that most states are actively engaged in the revision of state goals, content and performance standards, and curriculum and assessment frameworks. Much of this activity was underway even before the Title I legislation was changed in 1995, but the activity has accelerated since that time.

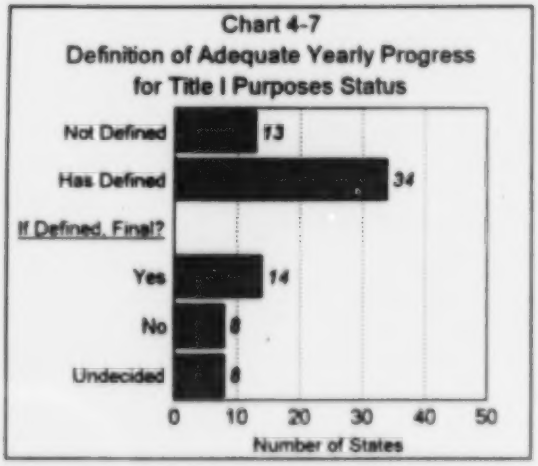


The requirement to establish two performance standards for students and schools ("proficient" and "advanced") was reported as a concern by states in last year's annual report. Chart 4-6 shows that states are farther ahead in this for the development of performance standards for students (they've done so with 35 state assessment components) than for schools (20 state assessment components). There are 29 state assessment components for which student performance standards have not been set and 33 components for which school performance standards have not been set.



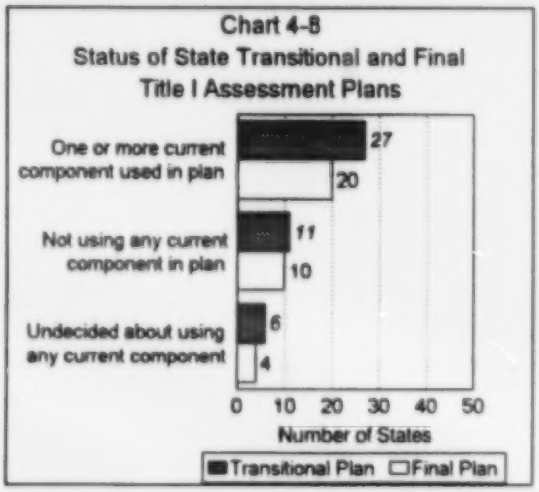
Adequate Yearly Progress

Once school performance standards have been set, the state needs to define adequate yearly progress for the school. The state has to determine whether or not the school has advanced the learning of Title I students (or all students in a school-wide program) sufficiently to satisfy the "adequate yearly progress" designation. According to Chart 4-7, 34 states have defined this, while 13 states have not. Whether or not these definitions are final definitions is less certain.



Status of State Title I Assessment Plans

States are currently required to have transitional Title I Assessment and Evaluation Plans in effect, but they will need to have final plans in place by the year 2000. Chart 4-8 displays where states are in designing their Title I assessment plans.



Approximately 60% of the states are using one or more of their current components for their transitional plans, while fewer states plan to use one or more of their current components in their final plans. Interestingly, norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, performance assessments, and writing assessments are all included in both transitional and final plans. Ten states report that they will not use any of their existing assessment components in their final Title I assessment plan. This indicates that approximately 20% of the states need to design or are in the process of designing a totally new assessment system.

Summary

There is so much assessment activity underway in the states that final Title I plans are still up in the air. New content standards are driving changes in assessment content and format, and until these changes are fully implemented, decisions about final Title I plans will not be made. Compared with last year's survey results, states are clearly making progress. However, much remains to be done, especially in the areas of setting school standards and defining adequate yearly progress.

Chapter Five
Statewide Assessment History and Trends

Introduction

This is the fifth year in which the information about statewide student assessment programs has been collected systematically and made available by CCSSO and NCREL. With data being collected for this number of years, it is possible to begin to see trends in the information. Although this section reports trends over a five-year period, trends still must be interpreted cautiously, since changes in student assessment programs take several years to conceptualize and implement. It is unlikely that substantial change will take place from one year to another. However, the information reported here is similar to information collected less formally in the past, so that it is possible to combine current detailed information with past information to perceive longer-term trends.

The purpose of the following sections is to comment on some of the changes that have occurred since the early 1970s, with particular emphasis on trends since 1991. In addition, several issues that may have implications for large-scale assessment in the future are mentioned.

Criterion-Referenced Assessment and Minimum Competency Tests

When the Association of State Assessment Programs (ASAP) was formed in 1977 to represent the assessment programs at the state and national levels, two strong innovations had occurred and were being spread throughout the states. First, states such as Michigan had adopted a new form of measurement called "criterion-referenced tests" in the early 1970s. Scores were reported as pass-fail for individual objectives as well as proportion of the objectives passed, rather than comparing student (or school or district) scores to national norms. Second, states began to use tests to determine whether students had learned enough to receive a high school diploma. This use of minimum competency testing for high school graduation was exemplified by the landmark program in Florida.

ASAP was formed by the states to assist them in developing quality assessment programs with the minimum of wasted effort and controversy. Early ASAP meetings were filled with discussions about the procedures for developing criterion-referenced tests, as well as surviving the inevitable legal challenges to the minimum competency tests, since the landmark legal case *Debra P. v. Turlington* was occurring then.

The predominant form of large-scale assessment at that time was norm-referenced tests. Interest in criterion-referenced tests was pushed along not only by the states that were using them, but also by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in its early years, since several states (such as California, Connecticut, Minnesota and Wyoming) gave the early NAEP assessments in "piggyback" style to obtain state and national data on their students. Not only did this practice introduce these states to criterion-referenced testing, it also served as an introduction to the concept of the state NAEP assessment program.

Advent of Writing Assessment

In the 1970s, assessment was limited usually to mathematics and reading. NAEP, however, added assessment in a number of additional subject areas, including science, social studies, citizenship, music, visual arts, career and occupational development, literature, and writing. Assessments included both conventional approaches such

as multiple-choice items, and less conventional approaches such as constructed-response and individually administered, hands-on performance measures. Many of these innovative approaches to assessment (and even the subject areas) were dropped due to budget cuts in the 1970s, but the continued use of performance measures in writing remained.

The NAEP assessments of writing in the early 1970s encouraged the belief that having all students at one or more grade levels actually write essays would be feasible. Although more expensive than the much more prevalent multiple-choice tests of "writing," essay tests were thought to be more content valid, and it was believed that they would lead to better teaching of writing. Substantial debate about the cost versus the benefit of this type of assessment occurred in the 1970s, but the belief in the use of performance assessment was so strong that it remains the prevalent form of assessment used in writing by states.

Expansion to Other Subject Areas

During the 1980s, additional states adopted large-scale assessment programs as a tool for school reform and improvement. Each year at the ASAP meetings, one or two states new to large-scale assessment efforts would attend. In addition, states were beginning to add other subject areas to their assessments. They began to develop assessments in areas such as science, social studies (or one or more of its components, such as history or geography), health education, physical education, the arts, and vocational education. Interest also grew in the sharing of assessment items or tasks among the states, since so many new states were now interested in large-scale assessment. Attempts were made to create item banks among the states. These generally proved unsuccessful, since each state clung to its own set of student expectations, making sharing of corresponding items challenging at best.

Performance Assessment

The latter part of the 1980s also brought attention to the form of assessment. Multiple-choice tests were (and still are) the major form of assessment used in most states, except for states that used a writing sample. In the last few years, a couple of trends have started. First, a small group of states (Maryland, Kentucky, California, and Arizona being first, now joined by Maine) has begun to use performance assessment (constructed-response formats) as the primary form of assessment. Other states are considering developing such programs, including Massachusetts and Delaware. These states demonstrated that it is feasible to administer alternative forms of assessment in a relatively cost-effective manner. However, concerns about test content caused the innovative assessment program in Arizona and California to be shelved and caused Kentucky to add a norm-referenced test to its assessment program.

Second, a number of states are working on or piloting alternative forms of assessment. This innovative work includes performance assessments that are given to individuals or small groups of students; curriculum-imbedded tasks in which assessment is intricately interwoven within teaching and assessment information is collected over several weeks or months; the use of portfolios to collect examples of student work for later scoring; and other innovative forms of assessment. As the SSAP survey indicates, few states have actually implemented these innovative alternative forms of assessment. Given the number of states reporting such work, these numbers might increase in the future. It is likely that, given the costs of alternative assessment in money and time, most states will move toward the concept of an assessment system using different forms

of assessment at different levels. For example, large-scale, standardized assessments with some alternative approaches might be used for state-level reporting, while more extensive programs of performance and/or portfolio assessment might be used to meet school or classroom assessment needs. Oregon is an illustration of such a program. Several states report that such innovative performance assessments are being developed for use by local educators.

States thinking about innovative approaches to assessment are challenged to consider the costs (both financial and instructional time) involved in using such measurement strategies, as well as the technical concerns about these new approaches to assessment. Although they have a strong advantage of illustrating better approaches to teaching and learning, alternative assessments may be less reliable for reporting individual student or school results, and certainly are more expensive. Therefore, in recent years, several states have considered the use of a "mixed" assessment model in which students are assessed with a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended exercises. This approach has the advantage of allowing states to assess more content but at lower cost than an entirely open-ended assessment. Kentucky is using this approach, and Massachusetts is considering it.

Another approach to broader content coverage is the use of every-pupil matrix sampling designs. This approach is useful where school and district information are more important than individual student results. Kentucky and Maryland have used this approach for several years.

Professional Development on Assessment

Attention to the forms of assessment used at both the state and local levels has encouraged another trend at the state level. As state educators have debated the appropriate forms of state assessments, they have increased attention on the training of classroom teachers to collect and use information collected in their classrooms. This trend is actually the convergence of several trends, including changes in student standards in order to emphasize thinking and problem-solving skills (while de-emphasizing memorization of content knowledge), plus support for alternative approaches to assessment, such as projects, exhibitions, demonstrations and the use of portfolios. The result is that many local districts and some state agencies are now providing classroom teachers with assessment learning experiences that teachers can apply in their classrooms. Washington State illustrates this activity quite well. This attention to professional development on assessment for classroom teachers is particularly appropriate, given that few if any teachers receive much in the way of pre-service training on assessment. The SSAP survey reports considerable attention to the use of test results by states.

Norm-Referenced Tests

When ASAP began meeting in 1977, the most commonly used assessments were commercially available, off-the-shelf, norm-referenced tests. Despite the attention to forms of measurement such as criterion-referenced assessments, which are more widespread today than 20 years ago, norm-referenced tests are still a predominant form of large-scale assessment. In recent years, there has been a slight decrease in the use of norm-referenced tests at the state level. In 1993, 31 states used norm-referenced tests, 30 reported using them in 1994, 31 states reported using them in 1995, and 29 states reported using norm-referenced tests in 1996.

There had been an expectation that this number would fall even further, given the de-emphasis on norm-referenced assessments in the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA),

the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. States are no longer required to use such assessments for the evaluation of Title I compensatory education programs, nor the monitoring of individual Title I student improvement. This was a major change in the legislation, which advocacy groups and others fought for and won. Instead, states are required to develop and operate "comprehensive assessment systems" capable of reporting whether individual students and school programs are making "adequate yearly progress."

Two events conspired to confound this prediction. First, the November 1994 election brought to power chief state school officers, state board of education members, legislators and governors with strongly-held ideas about student standards and assessment and with deeply held concerns about the new forms of assessment and their standards. In addition, policymakers and the public wanted national comparisons. Given problems in some of the assessment efforts first implemented (i.e., in Arizona, California and Georgia), policy-makers pushed to set aside innovative approaches to assessment and to return to commercially-available, norm-referenced tests. States such as Alabama re-implemented norm-referenced tests in addition to their criterion-referenced programs.

Second, the changes implemented in the IASA legislation have proven to be less far-reaching than originally thought. Due to political pressures, states will be required to change their statewide assessments substantially less than originally thought. States, for example, have five to six years to develop a final comprehensive assessment system (and only in mathematics and reading, not in all of the national goal areas, unless they do so for other students). In the interim, transitional assessments (norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, or performance assessments) can be used by states, so long as they "measure challenging state content standards," which is poorly defined in the federal legislation.

For these reasons, and because many policymakers desire to have comparative data using test instruments developed outside of states, norm-referenced tests likely will continue to be a major type of assessment used in states. To satisfy this desire for normative information, but using measures of higher-level standards, some states (such as Kentucky and North Carolina) have administered the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments to samples of students taking their statewide assessments in order to provide NAEP-like scores to buildings and districts (as well as the state). This recent innovation in providing normative information has the promise of allowing states to pursue new forms of assessment while still providing external referents for scores on the statewide assessments. It is even possible that some form of individual student NAEP test might be made available as well. It will be interesting to monitor the success of these efforts and to determine if this becomes a trend for the future.

In early 1997, President Clinton proposed a voluntary national test of fourth grade reading and eighth grade mathematics. His proposal was similar to one proposed in 1996 by Governor Engler of Michigan, then co-chair of the National Education Goals Panel. The President's proposal calls for the development (at federal expense) of a mixed assessment based on (but different than) the NAEP frameworks in these subjects, to yield individual student scores, and to be given at federal expense during its inaugural year of 1999. States would be free to sign up to give it, and several have proposed methods of linking the assessment to their current assessments, not unlike how Kentucky and North Carolina linked the NAEP assessments to their state assessments in the past.

The national test has been warmly received by some who view it as a means of gauging state performance on national content standards, avoiding some of the pitfalls seen by critics in the use of commercial norm-referenced tests. However, several states have expressed concerns about the viability of both the NAEP assessments and their own statewide assessments. The impact of the voluntary national tests has just begun to be felt, however, so it is too soon to tell what its longer term impact will be on states or the testing industry.

National Efforts at Joint Development

Another trend is worth noting. Until 1990, most assessment development was carried out by individual states working alone or with the assistance of a contractor. Since then, two innovations in collaboration among the states have taken place. The first is the New Standards, co-directed by the University of Pittsburgh Learning Research and Development Center and the National Center for Education and the Economy, which has been working with a number of states and local districts to design and develop an innovative assessment system that will encourage thoughtful student learning in areas such as mathematics, language arts and science.

The second is the Council of Chief State School Officers' State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS), which currently has 11 projects in which states work together to design or develop innovative student assessments. Both of these activities mark a first for collaboration among the states. The states are actively working together to develop assessments from which states share and use the products, rather than simply exchanging information about innovative assessment approaches, as has been the case in the past.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

One issue that states appear now to be facing is how to provide accommodations for students with disabilities on many of the statewide assessment components. Much work appears to be taking place to encourage local school districts to use various accommodations to increase the participation of these students, for several reasons. First, advocacy groups for these students have made participation in large-scale assessment programs a major issue. Second, federal agencies (the Offices of Special Education Programs and of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education) have provided substantial funding to states to investigate methods and procedures for accommodating students with disabilities. States have used funds to develop new assessments, to develop new accommodations policies, to research the impact of these accommodations policies, and to develop materials to explain accommodations. Third, national organizations such as the National Center for Educational Outcomes of the University of Minnesota have been tireless in their efforts to assist states in providing accommodations to all students. They have partnered with organizations such as CCSSO to work directly with state assessment and special education staffs in design work on accommodations.

All of this work has resulted in a wide variety of accommodations being provided by states with many of the assessment components run by states. The categories of accommodations contained in the survey include accommodations regarding presentation format, test setting, response setting, timing/scheduling and others. Interestingly, the accommodations permitted in one state may not be permitted in other states.

While many states offer a broad number of accommodations, few provide alternative assessments for students unable to use available accommodations to participate in the large-scale assessment program. Only six states reported providing alternative assessments (such as alternative portfolio assessments) that collect and report information on students. Of course, such alternative assessments raise various policy and technical issues.

Assessing English-Language Learning Students

As much work as there appears to be in providing accommodations for students with disabilities, much less work appears to be occurring in assessing students learning English (limited-English proficiency). More states report permitting exclusions of students from large-scale assessment requirements, and fewer accommodations are provided for these students. In addition, fewer alternative assessments are provided. Clearly, this is an area in need of both policy and technical development among the states. A CCSSO project is at work in developing appropriate assessments and accommodations for these students.

Future Issues and Their Impact on State Assessment

Overall, an examination of the changes in large-scale assessment programs during the past 20 years shows a substantial change in the number of states with such programs, the subject areas assessed, and the types of assessment measures used – as well as the types of assessment measures being developed (and the manner in which this development is proceeding). These changes have only increased in the past few years with the considerable public attention paid to the quality of schools.

Not surprisingly, these changes have led a number of states to re-examine assessment program designs that were adopted in years past. A number of states are examining whether their current assessment designs are still adequate and are looking at how such programs as NAEP, the New Standards, SCASS, IASA Title I and the national test fit within their overall assessment design. Given the number of states that are conducting such reviews, further changes in the nation's large-scale assessment programs are likely. Of course, it may take several years for these changes to be implemented.

Several trends appear at the state and local levels that may have a long-term impact on the shape of large-scale assessment programs at the state level. Certainly, the current emphasis on performance or alternative assessments is not going to disappear. Although there have been some successes (such as in Maryland and Kentucky), the set-backs in California, Arizona, Indiana and elsewhere indicate that widespread acceptance of performance assessment is not automatic. Technical issues need to be addressed in a sound manner, and policy-makers and the public need to understand the reasons for such measures, the student standards that they measure, and the reasons why both innovative standards and assessments are needed. States and others interested in innovative forms of assessment will need to make sure important parties are "on board" before engaging in this new development work. More than rhetoric is needed.

Certainly, there will be some impact of the drive now under way in some states to "de-regulate" public education and return control of it to local school districts. While this drive is taking several forms, it would not be unexpected for these pressures to affect the extent and types of student assessment in the future. In some states, this may mean less attention to statewide student expectations

and measures, while in other places, it may mean just the opposite.

The pressure to provide appropriate assessment training and experiences to classroom teachers is also not likely to abate. The collaborative work across states is likely to spread innovative approaches to assessment more quickly than it has in the past. In addition, the outside political pressures to use assessment as a tool for reform of schools is not likely to lessen. Changes brought about by federal legislation such as Goals 2000 and IASA will occur as well, but perhaps at a slower pace than once thought.

Finally, the reauthorization of the NAEP program brought several changes that also may affect states. In recent years, NAEP has offered the trial state-NAEP programs, but unfortunately, recent appropriations for the program plans have not permitted a full-scale state-NAEP program to be offered. During the past year, the National Assessment Governing Board, the policy-making board for NAEP, has suggested a number of changes to NAEP. It is uncertain at this point how many of these changes will be implemented for NAEP, what the shape of the program will be in the future, nor how the NAEP of the future will affect states. If the program is funded at a higher level, it might affect the number of states that administer norm-referenced tests to students at one or more grade levels, since the NAEP data could provide the types of national comparisons that some states desire that are more current, less expensive and more technically sound (particularly if NAEP data can be returned more quickly and in more useful formats). In addition, it is uncertain how the drive to develop a voluntary national test will affect NAEP, the use of norm-referenced tests, or states' large-scale student assessment programs.

Many swirling, cross-cutting trends at the state level are affecting large-scale assessment programs, and it is likely that these trends will affect the nature of statewide assessments in the future. With the annual State Student Assessment Program survey, it should be easier to track the course of changes in large-scale assessment programs at the state level. Future editions of this report will continue to indicate just how such changes are occurring.

Resources

Bond, L.A. & King, D. *State High School Graduation Testing: Status and Recommendations.* Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995.

Mehrens, W. *Issues and Recommendations Regarding Implementation of High School Graduation Tests.* Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1992.

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National Governors Association. *1996 National Education Summit Policy Statement.* Washington, DC: 1996.

Phillips, G. *The National Center on Education Statistics: Development Work and Research on Adaptations and Alternative Assessments for Students with Disabilities.* A presentation given at a Council of Chief State School Officers SCASS Special Education Assessment Meeting in Tampa, Florida, January 19, 1996.

Phillips, S. E. *Legal Implications of High-Stakes Assessment: What States Should Know.* Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1993.

Phillips, S.E. *All Students, Same Test, Same Standards: What the New Title I Legislation Will Mean for the Educational Assessment of Special Education Students.* Oak Brook, Illinois: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995.

Ysseldyke, J. *Overview of the Issues of Participation and Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Large-Scale Assessment Programs.* A presentation at a Council of Chief State School Officers SCASS Special Education Assessment Meeting in Tampa, Florida, January 19, 1996.

Summary Table: Statewide Assessment Programs, School Year 1995-96

ST	# COM	Grades													Subject								Test Type					Item Type							Testing Program Purposes											
		Kg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	LA	R	W	M	Sc	SS	Voc	Apt	NRT	CRT	WA	Per	Prf	MC	SWR	WRR	PT	ESW	PrJ	Std	Imp	PE	StA	StP	HD	ED	HSG	ScA	SPR	HSk	Acr
AK	1	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	A	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-
AL	6	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	-
AR	2	-	-	-	-	A	A	-	A	-	-	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-
AZ	1	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	-	A	A	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-
CA	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	V	V	V	V	-	-	-	V	V	V	V	-	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	Y	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
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DE	1	-	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FL	3	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-
GA	5	A	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	-
HI	3	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	A	-	V	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-
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IL	1	-	-	-	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y
IN	1	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	Y
KS	1	-	-	-	A	A	A	-	A	A	-	A	-	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	A	A	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y
KY	2	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	-	A	A	-	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-
LA	4	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	-	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-
MA	1	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	A	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	A	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-
MD	2	-	-	-	A	-	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	-	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Y
ME	1	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MI	2	-	-	-	-	A	A	-	A	A	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	A	-	S	-	-	A	A	S	S	A	A	A	A	S	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	-	Y	Y	-	Y
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MO	2	-	-	-	S	-	S	S	-	S	-	S	S	-	S	-	S	S	S	S	-	-	-	S	S	-	-	S	-	S	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y
MS	3	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	-	A	A	A	A	-	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	A	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Y
MT	1	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NC	3	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	S	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-
ND	1	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	A	-	A	-	A	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
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NJ	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	-	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	Y
NM	4	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	L	A	A	A	L	L	L	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	Y	-
NV	3	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	-
NY	7	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	V	-	-	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-
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PA	2	-	-	-	-	-	A	S	-	A	S	-	A	-	-	A	A	S	-	-	-	-	A	S	S	A	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-
RI	4	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	A	A	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-
SC	2	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-
SD	1	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TN	4	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-
TX	1	-	-	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	-	A	A	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	Y
UT	3	-	V	V	V	V	A	V	V	A	V	V	A	V	A	A	V	V	V	A	-	-	A	V	V	V	-	A	V	V	V	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-
VA	2	-	-	-	-	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	-	-	A	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	-
VT	2	-	-	-	-	V	-	-	-	V	-	V	-	-	-	-	V	V	-	-	-	-	-	V	-	V	V	-	V	V	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-
WA	1	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-
WI	2	-	-	-	A	A	-	-	-	A	-	A	-	-	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-
WV	3	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	A	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	A	-	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y
WY	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	107	2	3	4	24	32	22	23	18	39	16	30	35	16	38	26	34	43	30	26	6	3	29	33	36	23	4	41	24	36	9	10	4	27	43	38	10	5	1	3	17	8	33	5	11

Note: Colorado (CO), Iowa (IA), Minnesota (MN), and Nebraska (NE) did not administer any statewide assessments in 1995-96.

Summary Table Legend

Notes: Totals are computed by adding the number of A's, S's, V's, L's, and Y's in each column. In any cell, only one description is included. If multiple component description were possible for the same cell, then this cell was coded to match the component testing the most students. See Part III of the survey of the SSAP database for component names and component-level descriptions.

#COM=Number of State Assessment Components

Cell Contents
(indicates at least one component where)

- A= All students are tested
- S= Students are sampled
- V= Inclusion is voluntary for students, schools, or school districts
- L= Assessments are locally determined
- Y= Purpose is checked for at least one component

Subjects

- LA= Language Arts
- R= Reading
- W= Writing
- M= Math
- Sc= Science
- SS= Social Studies
- Voc= Vocational Ed
- Ap= Aptitudes

Test Type

- NRT= Norm-referenced testing
- CRT= Criterion-referenced testing
- WA= Writing assessment
- Per= Performance assessment
- Prt= Portfolio Assessment

Item Type

- MC= Multiple-choice items
- SWR= Short written response
- EWR= Extended written response
- PT= Performance Tasks
- ESW= Examples of Student Work
- Prj= Projects

Testing Program Purposes

Instructional Purposes

- StD= Student diagnosis or placement
- Imp= Improvement of instruction
- PE= Program Evaluation

Student Accountability

- StA= Student diagnois or placement
- StP= Student promotion
- HD= Honors diploma
- ED= Endorsed diploma
- HSG= High school graduation (exit requirement)

School Accountability

- ScA= Student awards or recognition
- SPR= Public school performance reporting
- HSk= High school skills guarantee
- Acr= Accreditation

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